

Teaching Professional Communication through the English Language in the Context of Korean and Russian Cultures

Natalia Proshyants
Pacific Naval Institute, Russia

ABSTRACT

The issues of teaching professional cross-cultural communication to would-be specialists through the English language is considered to be among the most crucial in TEFL. This paper argues that professional communication can be regarded in terms of three spheres: specific, protocol and socializing interaction. Specialists do not have many problems in the professional specific communication due to the fact that they act in their professional discourse in a similar way. A lack of cross-cultural skills while socializing in a foreign port or during a formal reception is caused by their cultural unawareness that resulted in linguistic barriers and failures to reach the communicative goals. This paper highlights that specifying the similarities, commonalities and differences in cultural behaviors is supposed to be the main objective for a teacher. Key concepts in understanding Korean culture should be referred to, for example, the way members of Korean and Russian professional teams realize various speech acts. The findings will allow one to develop a curriculum that fits the requirements of building cultural and linguistic competence.

Key Words: culture, language, specialist

I. Introduction

The forms of international professional interaction at sea in the Asia Pacific region in general, and between Russia and South Korea in particular, have developed greatly. The English language is specified as a tool for accomplishing joint professional missions. The increase of professional international contacts has contributed to new challenges in teaching English to would-be specialists in terms of the language use in the diverse cultural behavior environment. The issues of teaching culture through the English language have primarily been focused on the North American and British cultures at Russian schools and universities before. The cultural peculiarities of the Asian countries and particularly of Korea have been beyond the attention of university curricula till the present time. Currently the urgency of seeking new methods and techniques of teaching Korean culture through the English language in Russia is caused by the great interest in cooperation among professionals.

II Teaching Professional Cultural Communication through the English Language

The past 10 years have brought cardinal changes in the content, and forms of international professional interaction at sea. If the content of professional communication mainly consisted of holding formal talks during official friendly visits of Korean and Russian naval

ships before, then international sea cooperation has currently come to the solution of crucial questions concerning the organization of joint exercises and maneuvering, rescue operations, training personnel and other humanitarian projects. The English language can obviously be regarded as a tool for accomplishing joint professional missions between Asia – Pacific countries.

The situational analysis of international sea cooperation including “the roles adopted by participants, their prescribed norms of professional interaction” [C. Kramsch, 2001] defined three spheres of communication: protocol in the course of official visit, professional specific interaction for accomplishing joint missions and social activities in the foreign ports. The term “professional specific communication/ interaction” is used by me for the purpose of specifying the particular missions in the context of doing professional job by specialists. Here are some examples of the most typical situations and professional specific missions during international sea cooperation:

1. Communication check
2. Personnel transfer
3. Search and rescue drill
4. Night formation steaming
5. Firing exercise
6. Flag hoist drill
7. Pre-exercise conference
8. Pre-sail briefings
9. Simulation ship in distress
10. Safety agreements
11. Presentation on exercise plan
12. Voice drill
13. Tactical maneuvering
14. Maneuvering search and adapting to exercise area

The inquiry of specialists seems to indicate that they had cultural challenges in communicating with foreign colleagues mostly in the situations of protocol receptions and social activities in a foreign port rather than in professional specific situations in the course of sea cooperation between Russian and Korean personnel. Below, an example is given of communication between units while doing a vertical replenishment operation (VERTREP) in the course of sea interaction.

VERTREP Communications

Good ship-to-ship and ship-to-helicopter communications are essential in maintaining coordination in a VERTREP operation.

- Ships scheduled to receive material by VERTREP should maintain a continuous guard on the designated helicopter control circuit. The circuit shall be activated and tested prior to VERTREP. Circuit discipline must be maintained at all times. The helicopter control circuit shall not be used for routine traffic between ships guarding this circuit.
 - RS10 Sequence of replenishment (from ship _____) is to be _____ .
 - 1. STBD side (in order of call signs)
 - 2. PORT side (in order of call signs)
 - 3. ASTERN (in order of call signs)
- (from EXTAC 1005)

Hall’s concept “of high context communication” where most of the information is implicit because it is located in the physical context or part of a shared world view . . .” [Hall, 1996 from C. Kramsch, 2001] can probably be applied to professional specific cross cultural communication. Following the idea that “Culture, refers to widely shared ideals, values, formation and uses of categories, assumptions about life, and goal-directed activities that become unconsciously or subconsciously accepted as ‘right’ and ‘correct’ by people who identify themselves as members of a society.” [Brislin, 1990: 11 from Claire Kramsch,

1995] “, one can possibly make the conclusion that the specialists do not have many problems concerning cultural mutual understanding in the course of professional specific communication in spite of their national cultural diversity, owing to the fact that they belong to one professional group and they structure their discourse the similar way to meet professional communicative goals.

The lack of skills in cross cultural communication in the situations of social activities in a foreign port as well as at the reception during formal visits is likely caused by the general cultural unawareness of professionals that results in the language challenges and failures to reach the communicative objectives.

One of the major facets of professional interaction, which the analysis of cross cultural communication content has allowed to define, is the situation of communication itself. The situation of communication itself comprises the following components: the professionally conventionalized roles adopted by participants, their expected norms of interaction, the way they construct a shared sense of reality, the way their language reflects their discourses [C. Kramersch, 2001].

As opposed to professional specific situations, the situations of official visits and of Russian specialists' socializing in the ports of South Korea can be characterized as culturally influenced behavioral ones [the term of Barry Tomalin & Susan Stempleski, 2006], according to study research data. . This finding highlights the necessity of focusing on the teaching cultures of Asia - Pacific countries through the English language, in particular Korean culture to specialists. “Teaching members of one community how to talk and how to behave in the context of another discourse community potentially changes the social and cultural equation of both communities, by subtly diversifying mainstream cultures.” [C. Kramersch, 1995: 3]. Thus one of the main goal for a teacher is likely to be teaching culture through the English language as tool of international communication by specifying the similarities, commonalities and differences in cultural behaviors. that are typical to these situations.

This assumption is based on the idea of C. Kramersch that “the teaching of culture as a component of language teaching has traditionally been caught between the striving for universality and the desire to maintain cultural particularity. By nature it grapples with the following dilemma: Should it stress the commonalities or emphasize the differences between the native and the target culture?” [C. Kramersch, 1995: 5]. “Cultural characteristics are embedded within historical relations of power and authority which secure social, professional, political, pedagogical status through the way of speaking of particular speakers in a particular time and from a particular space.” [C. Kramersch, 1995:8].

The similarities and commonalities of cultural behavior of professionals do not seem to require as much attention and time for teaching as the differences. However, we should focus on similarities in order to show that interlocutors share the attitudes, values and beliefs with the professional group they belong to. For example, the way the members of different cultural groups (from Korea, Russia, etc.) realize various speech acts like greetings, introducing, thanking and display the verbal and non-verbal behavior, e.g. table manners, taking meals and drinks. Below is one of the teaching techniques that can contribute into raising cultural awareness of the students. It is based on the simulation of real life situations that can occur in Russia or Korea.

You are hosted by the Korean people and you present them a gift.. But they offer some resistance. What should you do?"

1. Insist for the second or third time until they feel free to accept? Or
2. Another ways of behaving in this situation?"

The ways of discussing these situations with the students may vary. This activity can be given as a home assignment to the students for the purpose of seeking for the proper responds by themselves using all the possible cultural information sources, including the internet. This activity can be also regarded as an example of a real life realization of cross-cultural conflict and the chance of preparing to meet these challenges.

Another way of implementing this task is a classroom activity. The benefits of a classroom activity which results in the adequate development of integrated language and culture skills are obviously proved by the idea of Bhabha: "The realization of cross-cultural conflict and incommensurability of values offers the opportunity to pause and muster the effort necessary to speak, quite literally, in terms of the other. Bhabha calls this pause "the time-lag of cultural difference" [Bhabha , 1992: 64 from C. Kramersch, 1995:8].

The raising awareness of cultural differences seems to be one of the key points in teaching professional cross cultural communication. The use of the English language can possibly be the device that can adjust the delay, confusion and misunderstanding during the interaction. We follow the idea of C. Kramersch that "The theoretical framework I propose here for teaching culture through language suspends the traditional dichotomy between the universal and the particular in language teaching. It embraces the particular, not to be consumed by it, but as a platform for dialogue and as a common struggle to realign differences." [C. Kramersch, 1995:9]

The analysis of protocol situations in Russia and Korea may possibly define the following verbal and non-verbal, cultural behavioral situations: table manners, taking meals and drinks, hygiene, expressing emotions, touching, addressing, respect for the government, keeping conversation, gestures. In a port the behavior in the public transportation, in the street, at a restaurant, and socializing is added.

III. Conclusions

1. Currently the urgency of seeking for new methods and techniques of teaching Korean culture through the English language in Russia is caused by the great interest in cooperation among professionals.
2. The specialists do not have many challenges in terms of cultural mutual understanding in the course of professional specific communication in spite of their national cultural diversity thanks to the fact that they belong to one professional group and they have their common discourse to achieve joint professional communicative goals.
3. The lack of cultural and language skills of professionals in the situations of socializing in a foreign port as well as during formal visits is likely caused by both the peculiarities of these situations which are abundant in diversity of Russian and Korean cultures and of general cultural unawareness of professionals.
4. The teaching of Russian and Korean culture through the English language as tool of

international communication should likely be done by specifying the similarities, commonalities and differences in cultural behaviors.

5. Focus on similarities definitely shows that interlocutors share the attitudes, values and beliefs of a professional discourse.
6. The raising awareness of cultural differences seems to be one of the key points in teaching professional cross cultural communication.
7. The use of the English language can possibly be the device that can adjust the delay, confusion and misunderstanding during the interaction. [Kramch].
8. The findings are likely to allow the development of a curriculum with the account of cultural peculiarities of professional communication between Russian and Korean specialists.
9. The designed curriculum seems to be considered a solution for developing communicative abilities, based on linguistic competence and professionally communicative competence, integrating language, culture and communication. The acquisition of professionally communicative and linguistic competence contributes into students' developing strategies for raising cross-cultural awareness.

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About the Presenter

Proshyants Natalia, Ph.D, professor, a chair of foreign languages department of the Pacific Naval Institute has been doing research in the sphere of teaching ESP for over 15 years. Her research sphere is ESP, materials writing, designing curriculum, teaching intercultural communication through the English language, the use of information technologies in teaching English, the research methods of teaching foreign languages. *Email: nata_proshjants@yahoo.com, nata_proshjants@mail.ru*